

Aberllynfi

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Introduction

Aberllynfi is an elongated linear settlement sited within the flood plain of the Wye valley adjacent to its tributary, the Afon Llynfi. The modern settlement lies at the junction of the A438 and A4079 roads.

This brief report examines its emergence and development up to 1750. For the more recent history of the settlement, it will be necessary to look at other sources of information and particularly at the origins and nature of the buildings within it.

The accompanying map is offered as an indicative guide to the historic settlement. The continuous line defining the historic core offers a visual interpretation of the area within which the settlement developed, based on our interpretation of the evidence currently to hand. It is not an immutable boundary line, and may need to be modified as new discoveries are made. The map does not show those areas or buildings that are statutorily designated, nor does it pick out those sites or features that are specifically mentioned in the text.

We have not referenced the sources that have been examined to produce this report, but that information will be available in the Historic Environment Record (HER) maintained by the Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust. Numbers in brackets are primary record numbers used in the HER to provide information that is specific to individual sites and features. These can be accessed on-line through the Archwilio website (www.archwilio.org.uk).

History of development

There is evidence for both Iron Age and Roman settlement at Aberllynfi (centred on the hillfort of Aberllynfi Gaer), though neither is necessarily connected with the presumed area of medieval settlement (examined here) nor the modern village at Three Cocks.

The presence of medieval settlement here has yet to be established but could have been centred on the castle and church to the north-west of the present village, although both sites have long been abandoned and there is now no surviving evidence of habitation from that period.

The earliest reference is from 1234 when it is recorded as *Abberlenevy*, with the straightforward meaning of 'the mouth of the river Llynfi'. It was regularly mentioned in medieval documents with minor variations in the form of the name, and has been identified as one of the English knights fees during the 14th century.

The post-medieval focus of the settlement appears to have shifted slightly to the south-east to Three Cocks on the main A438 road. This was presumably during the 18th century, once Aberllynfi church fell into disuse, and as the Hay to Brecon road grew in importance. The first mention of the Three Cocks Inn was in 1754, and it is quite possible that this was the earliest building on the main road.

The heritage to 1750

Aberllynfi Gaer, a scheduled ancient monument (494; SAM B159) is a small multivallate earthwork enclosure; typical of Iron Age hillforts in the region. Small-scale excavations in 1951 indicated that this site had had a long use, with evidence of Neolithic activity (which

pre-dated the hillfort), and also Roman reuse of the site. Other signs of Roman activity have come from Gwernyfed Park to the south of the Gaer.

Aberllynfi castle, also a scheduled ancient monument (513; SAM B80), is a typical medieval motte and bailey, though the bailey has been all but destroyed. Aberllynfi is generally assumed to be the castle that changed hands several times in 1233.

The site of St Eigon's church (527) stands some 50m south-east of the castle and is now barely visible in an area of open low lying riverside pasture. The precise nature and plan of the building is not entirely clear, but it is a reasonable assumption that the stone-walled ruin (some 20m by 8m) standing on the traditional site is the church. If this is the case then the church was probably a simple, two-celled building, perhaps originally a chapel to the castle, and has subsequently assumed the role of a village church though there is no churchyard. Glasbury church register records marriages and baptisms at Aberllynfi up until 1695 and it appears to have gone out of use soon afterwards, though a date as late as 1731 has been proposed. There are antiquarian stories of monuments to the Williams' family of Gwernyfed in the church.

Possibly the area around the church and the castle contained some form of medieval settlement, although no obvious remains now survive. The most likely areas are probably to the south and west of the castle. Whether there was such settlement here, however, has yet to be determined.

Great House Farm (9266) is a ruinous building, lying south of the castle, which probably dates from the 18th century and is of considerable local architectural interest. It is sited within semi-landscaped grounds (now comprising neglected orchard and woodland), and it is possible that any trace of medieval settlement in this area may have been removed by these features.

The Three Cocks Hotel (20815) is stated to be a 16th or 17th-century coaching inn. Otherwise there are no buildings at Three Cocks obviously earlier than the 18th century, while the mill buildings (2988) and a barn (2989) adjacent to that building probably date from that century. These support the general contention that this part of Aberllynfi is merely the post-medieval re-location of the village.

